

# Snowden denounces US moves to block his asylum requests

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Edward Snowden, the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor who exposed NSA spying on the US and world population, issued a powerful statement yesterday denouncing the global manhunt Washington is mounting against him.

In the statement, initially posted on the WikiLeaks web site, Snowden explains that he decided to leave Hong Kong on June 23 “after it became clear that my freedom and safety were under threat for revealing the truth.”

Snowden has been trapped in Moscow’s Sheremetyevo airport since then, hoping to fly on to Ecuador to seek asylum. Washington has revoked his US passport, and US Vice President Joseph Biden called Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa urging him not to grant Snowden asylum. Correa has rescinded a travel document granted to Snowden at the Ecuadorean embassy in London.

Snowden’s statement continues, “On Thursday, President Obama declared before the world that he would not permit any diplomatic ‘wheeling and dealing’ over my case. Yet it is now being reported that after promising not to do so, the President ordered his Vice President to pressure the leaders of nations from which I have requested protection to deny my asylum petitions ... Sadly, this right [to asylum], laid out and voted for by the US in Article 14 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is now being rejected by the current government of my country.”

Noting that the revocation of his US passport has left him stateless though he has been convicted of no crime, he concludes: “In the end, the Obama administration is not afraid of whistleblowers like me, Bradley Manning, or Thomas Drake. We are stateless, imprisoned, or powerless. No, the Obama administration is afraid of you. It is afraid of an informed, angry public

demanding the constitutional government it was promised—and it should be.”

Snowden’s statement exposes the debased state of political life in the United States and internationally. Snowden has revealed pervasive Internet monitoring of US citizens and individuals and governments worldwide, carried out in blatant violation of protections in the Bill of Rights of the US Constitution against unreasonable searches. Under the cover of the “war on terror,” unelected cabals of intelligence and security officials in the US and US-allied regimes complicit in these programs have set up the surveillance infrastructure of police states.

Now, it is Snowden, and not the officials guilty of overseeing these programs, who is targeted by an intense, global manhunt. With governments internationally implicated in these programs or cowering before their perpetrators, the only remaining constituency for democratic rights and the defense of Snowden is the international working class.

The Correa government made a cowardly statement yesterday evening to justify its decision to abandon Snowden. Correa distanced himself from the Ecuadorean consul in London, Fidel Narvaez, who issued a travel document to Snowden to travel from Hong Kong to Ecuador via Moscow. Correa declared that even though this decision was taken because Snowden feared for his life in Hong Kong, it was a “mistake.”

Significantly, Narvaez cited the historical precedent of Ecuadorean diplomats in Czechoslovakia during World War II—who gave Jews visas to escape fascist mass murder in Europe—in order to justify his decision to help Snowden escape Hong Kong.

Correa repudiated Narvaez’s decision, while conceding that Narvaez’s arguments were correct: “I

told him, ‘OK, if you think you did the right thing, I respect your decision, but you could not give, without authorization, that safe conduct pass. It was completely invalid, and he will have to accept the consequences.’”

Snowden’s revelations have undermined the public justifications advanced for NSA spying programs by the Obama administration, which claimed they were part of the “war on terror.” In fact, they were widely used to spy on commercial and political discussions at embassies and government installations of Washington’s European allies. Unless Washington claims that the European Union is a terrorist organization planning to attack the United States, US spying programs are manifestly being used in the strategic interests of US banks and military-intelligence forces.

This spying proceeded even though European countries—including states such as France and Germany that were labeled “third-class partners” by the NSA—reportedly shared Internet traffic data with Washington.

Embarrassed and apparently taken aback by the scale of US spying, leading European officials are protesting the NSA programs. German Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrberger said, “It is beyond comprehension that our friends in the United States see Europeans as enemies.”

Elmer Brok, the chairman of the European Parliament’s foreign affairs committee, said, “the spying has reached dimensions that I did not think were possible for a democratic country ... [The United States] lost all balance, George Orwell is nothing by comparison.”

Several European officials, including French President François Hollande and European Commissioner Viviane Reding, called for negotiations on a proposed US-EU free trade zone to be postponed.

Snowden has reportedly given Russian authorities applications for asylum to 15 countries, including Russia itself. Despite public support for Snowden in Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a cynical and ambiguous statement, implying that Russia might grant him asylum on certain conditions—including that he cease publishing information that embarrassed the US government.

Putin said, “If [Snowden] wants to go somewhere and they accept him, please, be my guest. If he wants to

stay here, there is one condition: he must cease his work aimed at inflicting damage to our American partners, as strange as it may sound from my lips.”

Later, Putin appeared to indicate that Russia would not grant Snowden asylum: “Because he sees himself as a human rights activist and a freedom fighter for people’s rights, apparently he is not intending to cease his work. So he must choose for himself a country to go to and where to move.”

These statements make clear that, without a struggle by the working class to defend Snowden and democratic rights, his fate will be left up to the twists and turns of negotiations between the reactionary Russian and US governments.

Nikolai Patrushev, the head of Russia’s security council and a former head of Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB, the former Soviet-era KGB), said that Russian and US officials would discuss Snowden’s case: “[Putin and Obama] do not have a decision that would suit both sides. So they have ordered FSB director [Alexander] Bortnikov and FBI director [Robert] Mueller to be in constant contact and find possible solutions.”

Several media outlets have speculated that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who arrived yesterday in Moscow on a two-day trade visit, might grant Snowden asylum and fly him to Venezuela on his official jet. However, protection from the Maduro regime—which recently held talks with right-wing billionaires and with US Secretary of State John Kerry, apparently to repair relations with the US after the death of President Hugo Chavez—is no guarantee against US persecution.



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